

Teaching in the Third Term : Early Trends

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Key Words: Motivation. Attitude. Expansion.

I Introduction

An Intensive for—credit course was offered to third year students as an elective course for the first time in January 1996 (during winter vacation). The students studied for three hours per day over an eight day period with native speaking English instructors.

Evaluation of 1996 Winter Intensive Program:

Third year Engineering Students.

It was hoped by the organizers that this intensive program would prove valuable in three ways:

- 1) The students would be able to focus completely on English without any other academic distractions.
- 2) The students would be able to apply what they had learned on a day to day basis and build on it (as opposed to having a week break between lessons).
- 3) It would have a positive influence on the students attitudes toward learning English and increase their awareness of other cultures.

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The instructors had two main concerns:

- a) It may be difficult for the students to concentrate for three hours a day, and thus such a program may have a negative effect on the students attitudes toward learning English.
- b) Students might not be able to digest the same amount of material in eight days that they would normally cover over a four month period.

In an attempt to evaluate the success of the program a questionnaire was given to the students at the end of the course asking their opinions on the intensive classes. Along with the trends resulting from this questionnaire, are the instructors' observations and comments.

II A Description of the Students.

This course was open to all Engineering departments to include third year and any interested fourth year students. The final roster consisted of 42 third year students (21 in each class) including several foreign students.

III A Description of the Curriculum.

Both Mr. Cooper and Ms. Haga's classes encompassed all skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) with a heavy emphasis on oral communication.

Darren Cooper

This course was designed specifically for those students thinking of traveling overseas for study, work or pleasure. It was a general conversation course which focused on a variety of survival situations which were felt to be the most problematic for first-time travelers.

These included:

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1) Going Through Customs | 6) Making Requests |
| 2) Changing Money | 7) Making Invitations |
| 3) Reserving Hotels | 8) Ordering in a Restaurant |

4) Asking for Directions 9) Shopping

5) Describing One's Health

Each lesson targeted one or two of the above topics where students learned key phrases and grammar for each situation. Students then went through a variety of listening exercises and drills to practice the target language before producing it themselves in pairs or groups through role playing activities. Each topic was also supported by background notes and cultural information which contained practical hints for traveling.

Homework assignments were given everyday with a heavy emphasis on grammar and sentence structure. A comprehensive test was given once a week to see how well the students could produce the target language in different scenarios.

Lori Haga

The purpose of the course was to motivate the students to think in English. To use known vocabulary to advance concentration, to improve listening ability, dictation skills and to develop a positive mental attitude. This course used mainly original materials developed to encourage lateral thinking so that the students would be able to adapt their language to unfamiliar situations and be flexible enough in their thinking to understand the essence of a dialogue even if some key words were unfamiliar. They were expected to be able to explain or describe things as simply and clearly as possible and to persevere and adapt their language until their meaning was understood. The class worked mainly in pairs or groups to solve problems. e. g. Explaining processes, operations, descriptions and instructions,... The students were tested with quizzes, dictation and problem solving. The different themes were expanded and the previous days' work was built on to encompass more difficult exercises. The course was concentrated and fast paced. The students had no time to translate into Japanese. They had to concentrate to increase their listening and

dictation ability. Because they had to listen and communicate they were starting to think and evaluate which increased their self-confidence and motivation.

Most students borrowed videos or tapes for additional study at home.

IV Results of Post-Course Survey

A questionnaire was given to the students on the last day of class. It consisted of fourteen multiple choice questions and three questions requiring written comments. Students were instructed to fill out the questionnaire fully and multiple answers were acceptable.

The students' opinions have been summarized under the following categories:

- 1) Motivation for Taking the Class
- 2) Work Ethic during the Course
- 3) Attitudes Toward Consecutive Classes
- 4) Self-confidence in English
- 5) Intensity and Workload of the Program
- 6) Additional Comments
- 7) Suggestions for future courses

1) Motivation for Taking the Class

The first question on the questionnaire:

"Why did you choose the course?"

この授業を選択した理由は何ですか？（複数回答可）

was an attempt to understand the students' motivation for taking an elective course outside of the regular term.

Motivation can be divided into REWARD and INTEREST. REWARD motivation is a desire to learn in order to reach a specific goal (i. e.: to obtain credits), while INTEREST motivation, is the desire to learn in order to understand or associate with a certain culture or language. When dividing the students' motivation into such categories the results were as follows.

1) Motivation

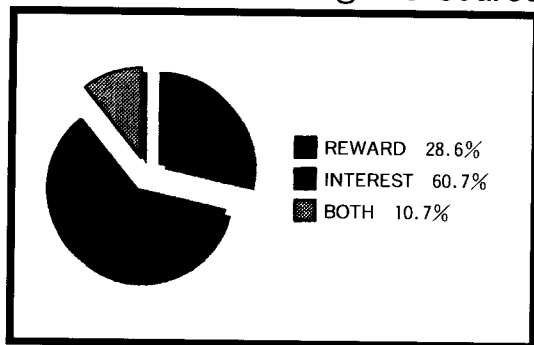
REWARD / Credit (8)

INTEREST/ Culture (17)

BOTH-INTEREST/ REWARD (3)

A) Pie Chart:

Motivation for taking the course



While it is impossible to determine which kind of motivation makes for a better student (i.e., which are more motivated to attend class regularly, do extra work on their own etc.), it is refreshing to see that the majority of the students attended the program at least partly to learn more about a foreign culture or language.

2) Work Ethic

One of the justifications for the winter program is that it allows students to focus on learning English without any other academic distractions. With more free time, one would hope the students would spend more time studying and preparing for the course and thus absorb more than they would during a regular term.

As seen in the results (Question #4), the majority either did no preparation for the class or only as asked to by the instructor. On the same note, a majority of the students said they did not do more homework than they would have in the regular term (Question #6). Finally, only half of the students reviewed material at home at most

some of the time (Question #5). In support of this trend is the fact that only eight of the forty students who commented on the advantages of the course mentioned that they did not have to worry about other lessons (Question #16). On a more positive note, all but two of the students surveyed were determined to understand what they were learning, consulting a friend, teacher, or the dictionary when unable to understand something (Question #3).

3) Attitude Towards Consecutive Classes

It was the hope of the instructors that by having daily contact with English and native speakers that the students wouldn't forget what they had learned so readily (since they would be expected to be able to use it the next day) and thus would come away from the program having absorbed more material and feeling more comfortable using English.

In their written responses to (Question #16)

What are the advantages of an intensive course?

16. 通常の授業に比べて、集中講座にはどんな長所がありますか？

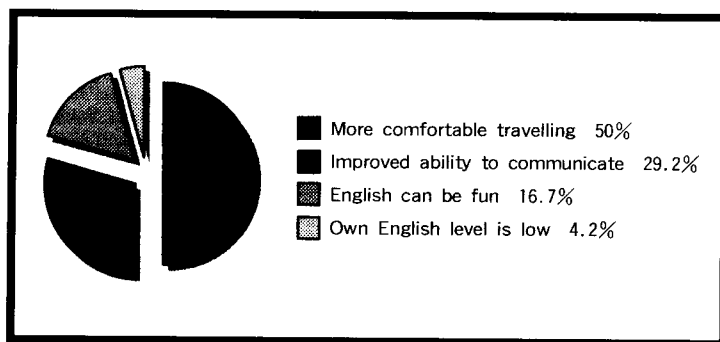
Twenty five out of forty students felt that having daily contact with English prevented them from forgetting the material and made it easier to understand.

4) Self Confidence

While it is unrealistic to think that a student's communication skills can be enhanced greatly after two weeks of instruction, such a course can be valuable in strengthening the student's interest in foreign cultures as well as his or her self-confidence in learning a language.

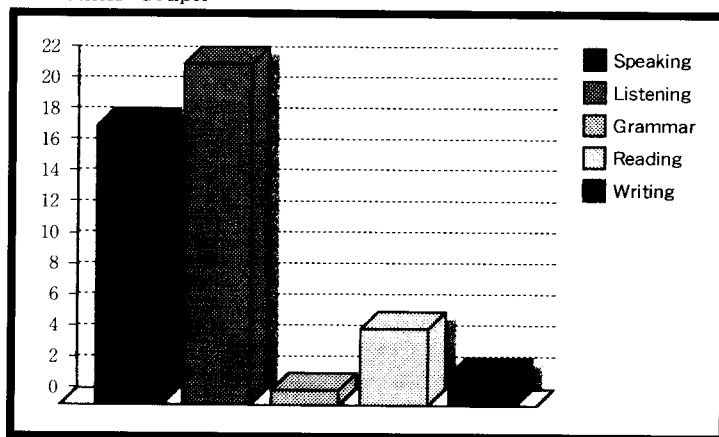
Results from Questions #10 and #11 were used to determine if student confidence did actually rise.

Self Confidence Pie Chart



11. Which skills do you think you have developed in the course
この授業により、自分のどの英語能力がついたと思いますか？

Skills Graph



As seen above, all but one of the students that responded to question #10, felt that they were better prepared to travel, had learned better ways to communicate in English, and / or found English to be fun and interesting. In addition, the vast majority of students responded to question #11 by saying that their speaking and / or listening skills had improved.

5) Intensity and workload

Since the intensive course is worth the same number of credits as a regular semester class, the amount of material covered and work expected from the students should theoretically, be the same. Students of the intensive program, however, had only eight days to digest the same amount of material that is usually covered over four months. The instructors were thus concerned that students would fall behind and be unable to absorb so much in so little time.

When asked what they thought about the amount of material covered in the course (question #7), however, all but six said it was suitable, while two students actually felt they could have learned more. In addition, when asked how difficult they found the class (question #2), twenty said it was "just right" while five claimed it was too easy.

Another concern was that students would find it hard to concentrate and maintain interest for three hours on a daily basis (as opposed to a regular 1.5 hour class once a week). When asked if three hour lectures were too long (question #14), half responded yes and the other half no. In terms of how many days a week they would like to study (question #15) all but two thought classes should be given at least 3 times a week.

6) Additional Comments

In questions #16 and #17 the students responded in writing on the advantages and disadvantages of the course. As mentioned earlier most students found the intensive program advantageous because it allowed them to study without any other distractions and they could apply what they had learned on a daily basis. In addition 5 of the 40 students commented on how smaller classes allowed them to bond with other students and thus feel more relaxed. While seven found no disadvantages with the course the remaining comments varied greatly.

Some complained about the weather (heavy snowfall) and how difficult it was to come to class on time, while others claimed the course was too short and the topics too broad.

V Instructors' Comments

From an instructor's point of view, teaching an intensive course, is somewhat challenging. To start, trying to cover four months worth of material over eight days without overworking your students is very difficult. In addition, trying to maintain the students' interest over three hours is also difficult. It seems that we were successful in covering just the right amount of material.

In an attempt to determine what type of teaching and learning style would keep the students' interest for three hours daily they were asked several questions:

As shown in the survey (questions #8 and #9), most students prefer audio and visual props when learning on their own or in class. In addition most students preferred to work in pairs or groups as opposed to on their own (question #12). The use of computers, videos and tapes would thus seem to be effective in maintaining the interest of the students over a long period.

VI Conclusion.

Overall, we feel that the students developed a positive attitude to the intensive course. The majority of the students seemed to be relaxed and receptive in class. In addition the students benefited from practicing their new skills on a day-to-day basis, and came out of the course feeling more confident about their ability to communicate in a foreign language.

We were able to cover a greater amount of material in the intensive course as opposed to a regular weekly course because the students were able to build on and expand on the previous lessons.

On the downside, some of the students found it difficult to concentrate for three hours. This could partly be remedied by providing the students with more stimulating audio / visual materials with which to learn from. At the same time, the intensive course could run over a four week period with two hour classes daily, three times a week. This would in effect eliminate the only downside of the program, while keeping all of the advantages in tact. It is thus the recommendation of the instructors involved that the course be continued but class time be reduced.

Nagaoka University of Technology Intensive English Course. Analysis of student opinions.

Check ☐ the answers or write a comment.

該当する回答を選択するか、意見を書き込んで下さい。

1. Why did you choose the course?

この授業を選択した理由は何ですか？（複数回答可）

- 2 ☐ It was a compulsory course.
- 11 ☐ The instructor was a native speaker.
- 10 ☐ The course introduction was interesting.
- 0 ☐ It was relevant to my specialty.
- 12 ☐ I wanted to improve my English.
- 10 ☐ I needed extra credits.
- 1 ☐ Other....(please specify).....

2. What did you think of the degree of difficulty of the course?

この授業の難易度は、あなたにとってどうでしたか？

- 0 ☐ It was too difficult.
- 4 ☐ It was difficult but challenging.
- 20 ☐ It was just right.
- 2 ☐ It was a little easy.
- 3 ☐ It was too easy.

3. What did you do when you could not understand something?

授業で理解出来なかった箇所が出てきた時、どうしましたか？（複数回答可）

- 18 ☐ Asked a friend.
- 16 ☐ Asked the teacher.
- 17 ☐ Consulted the dictionary..
- 2 ☐ Nothing.

4. How often did you prepare for the course?

どれ位、授業のために予習をしましたか？

- 0 ☐ Everyday.
- 6 ☐ Sometimes.
- 8 ☐ Only when specifically asked.
- 15 ☐ Never.

5. How often did you review the course?

どれ位、授業のために復習をしましたか？

- 8 ☐ Everyday.
- 8 ☐ Sometimes.
- 7 ☐ Only when specifically asked.
- 6 ☐ Never.

6. Compared with a "regular" English course, did you do more or less homework in the intensive course?

通常の英語授業に比較して、集中講座のための自習を、どれ位しましたか？

- 7 ☐ More.
- 9 ☐ About the same.
- 13 ☐ Less

7. What did you think about the amount of material covered in the course?

この講座で使用された教材の量についてどう思いますか？

- 4 ☐ Too much material to understand.
- 23 ☐ Suitable.
- 2 ☐ Not enough material. I could have studied more.

8. What audio-visual materials were used in this course?

どんな視聴覚教材が使用されていましたか？

- 26 ☐ Audio tapes for listening.
- 3 ☐ Audio tapes of your own voice.
- 22 ☐ Video tapes.
- 1 ☐ Video cameras.
- 3 ☐ Compact Discs.

- 7 ☐ Computers.
- 4 ☐ C. D. Roms.
- 10 ☐ Overhead Cameras.

9. What audio—visual materials would you like to use in future classes?

どんな視聴覚教材の使用を、今後の授業に希望しますか？

- 7 ☐ Audio tapes for listening.
- 3 ☐ Audio tapes of your own voice.
- 11 ☐ Video tapes.
- 4 ☐ Video cameras.
- 1 ☐ Compact Discs.
- 8 ☐ Computers.
- 2 ☐ C. D. Roms.
- 5 ☐ Overhead Cameras.

10. What important or interesting thing did you learn?

どんな有意義な、又は興味深い事を学びましたか？

It was useful for travel abroad.

I studied the essence of conversation.

I studied basic conversation for overseas travel.

I studied practical English—how to ask questions.

i. e. getting on / off a bus.

English for travel abroad.

I learnt practical English for foreign travel.

I learnt that my grammar is bad.

I now know how to live in America / Canada / England.

Giving directions / handling money.

Shopping and changing money.

It was useful for foreign travel.

I learnt about traveling overseas and how to solve problems.

I learned that I should use easier English.

I can talk to a foreigner more easily now.

English is fun to study.

I listened to interesting English.

I could understand how to make conversation.

Crosswords / customs declarations / Listening.

I think I learnt interesting things.

Even without an understanding of grammar if I make an effort I can communicate.

Conversation was much more fun than studying grammar or reading.

I learnt how to write customs cards and read air tickets.

It was very useful for when I travel abroad in the future.

11. Which skills do you think you have developed in the course?

この授業により、自分のどの英語能力がついたと思いますか？

18 ☐ Speaking

22 ☐ Listening 19 Grammar

5 ☐ Reading

2 ☐ Writing

12. How do you prefer to work in language classes ?

どの授業方式が一番好きですか？

2 ☐ Work alone.

14 ☐ Work with a partner.

15 ☐ Work in a group.

13. How do you study English on your own?

自分自身では、どのようにして英語を勉強していますか？

11 ☐ By watching English-language television or videos.

15 ☐ By listening to foreign music.

1 ☐ By mixing with foreign students or native speakers.

0 ☐ By going to a commercial language school.

5 ☐ By studying abroad.

14. Were three-hour lectures too long to concentrate on English?

3時間は、授業に集中するには長すぎますか？

9 ☐ Yes, they were.

11 ☐ No, they were not.

15. How often do you think this class should be given?

この英語の授業は一週間に何回が適当だと思いますか？

- 11 ☐ Four times a week.
- 7 ☐ Three times a week.
- 2 ☐ Twice a week.
- 0 ☐ Once a week.

16. What are the advantages of an intensive course?

通常の授業に比べて、集中講座にはどんな長所がありますか？

- 4 Small class, so more detailed explanations.
- 8 I didn't have to worry about other subjects so could concentrate on English.
- 3 Daily lessons are not easily forgotten.
- 10 Concentrated lessons, higher level, more detailed.
- 5 Class is well united.
- 4 Before forgetting about yesterday's lesson, I could make use of it in the next lesson.
- 4 Easy to study and remember.
- 3 Can progress slowly over three hours.
- 2 I could study practical English.
- 1 I really enjoyed the class.
- 1 Can get credits in two weeks.
- 1 Was mainly review for me and thus easy to master.
- 1 It can be used in daily conversation.
- 1 No friction for conversation.

17. What are the disadvantages of an intensive course?

通常の授業に比べて、集中講座にはどんな短所がありますか？

- 7 None.
- 6 Lesson time (two weeks) was too short.
- 3 Traveling to school is difficult during winter.
- 3 I had to come to school during holidays.
- 3 It was too easy.

- 2 I cannot concentrate so long.
- 2 Homework must be done by the next day..
there is not enough time to think.
- 2 If the course were longer than 2 weeks, it would be too tiring.
- 1 Daily study is difficult.
- 1 Some weeks later I may forget.
- 1 Starting at 10 AM would be better.